

Obituary

David Warton (Dave) Kirby

5 September 1950 – 1 October 2020

Obituary compiled by Frank Naude from input by the Kirby family and friends.

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David Kirby was born on 5 September 1950. His parents were Gwen (née Henley) and Ron Kirby, who was the organist and choirmaster at the Cathedral of St Michael & St George in Grahamstown, Eastern Cape. Gwen was a direct relative of WE Henley, Britain's Victorian Poet Laureate, whose famous poem *Invictus*, contains the lines that have inspired so many people: *I am the master of my fate, / I am the captain of my soul*. Dave was rightfully very proud of this association.

Dave attended Oatlands Prep School (1956 – 1958), St. Andrew's Prep (1959 – 1963), and St. Andrew's College (1964 – 1967). He loved all sports and did particularly well in cricket and athletics, as well as being a member of the St Andrew's College Pipe Band.

After school, Dave was in the first batch of Army conscripts, a system introduced in January 1968, and served in the Anti-Tank platoon of the 6th South African Infantry.

Having developed a keen interest in land surveying as a youngster, after his military service Dave enrolled for the degree of B.Sc. Land Surveying at the University of Cape Town, with the financial assistance of a bursary from the then South African Railways & Harbours. While at UCT, from 1969 to 1973, he was a member of their athletics team, and acquitted himself well in middle distance events.

In 1974, Dave joined the SAR&H, in fulfilment of his bursary conditions, and stayed with them until 1978. Thereafter, he had a temporary change of career and joined Burroughs Machines in their sales division from 1979 to 1981; following this with a short stint at BiC as Manager of Computer Accounts, from 1982 to 1983.

The call of Dave's chosen career was very strong, however, and in 1983 he returned to land surveying, in his own private practice. One of his major projects was the survey of the Ratanda Township in Heidelberg, Gauteng.

Dave's love of fishing, and his desire to move his family away from the "big city", led him to approach Frank Naude of Hudson & Naude, Land Surveyors of Margate & Port Shepstone, while he and his family were on holiday at Shelly Beach during 1985. It was one of those proverbial cases of 'being in the right place at the right time', as Hudson & Naude were looking for a Professional Land Surveyor to assist them with their workload.

This chain of events led to Dave first of all being employed by Hudson & Naude as a professional assistant and then becoming a full partner in 1987. 'Hudson Naude Kirby' (later to be known as 'HNK Geomatics') was born; it was to be a partnership that would last for 31 years, until Dave retired on 28 February 2018 and relocated to George, where his roots and members of his family were.

On a professional level, Dave loved being a Land Surveyor and had an incredibly strong and steadfast work ethic, something he maintained throughout his career. He always went above and beyond for his clients, and took his role as mentor to young graduates doing their articles or experiential training very seriously. When someone expressed interest in the field of land surveying, he would take them under his wing and impart his vast knowledge and experience to them, always with a mixture of unruffled patience and infectious enthusiasm.

The offices of HNK delighted in his keen sense of humour and banter, characteristically leavened with gentle empathy. He had an open-door policy to all staff and always found an amicable solution to any personal or work affiliated issues.

Dave was a Member of the SAGI KZN Branch Council from 1989 to 2000, starting in the Marketing sub-committee in 1989, graduating to Branch Secretary in 1996, and finishing as Convenor of the Sectional Title sub-committee in 1997 to 2000.

Having been born into a very musical family, Dave loved all music, whether classical or pop, and he was a talented pianist, as well as a fine guitarist and singer. He also played league squash, and later in life enjoyed fly-fishing and hiking in the Drakensberg. His civic mindedness meant that he served on Governing Bodies of schools and on the Executive of Child Welfare Margate, as well as officiating as Church Warden in the Margate Anglican Church.

David Kirby would have been the first – by some way – to acknowledge the importance of the role played by his beloved wife, Sue, in all his endeavours, achievements and successes. They were married in 1977, and had two sons, Richard, born in 1979, and David, born in 1983. Dave and Sue's hosting abilities were legendary, and their many friends on the KZN South Coast will have numerous stories to relate in this regard for years to come.

Dave celebrated his 70th birthday on 5 September 2020; and passed away shortly afterwards, on 1 October 2020, after a cruel illness very stoically borne. He never lost his mischievous sense of humour, right to the very end, and he will be greatly missed by family and countless friends from all walks of life.

David Kirby is survived by his wife Sue, sons Richard and Davey, daughter-in-law Christina, and granddaughter Sophie.

Early on the morning of 7 November 2020, an enthusiastic group of family and friends, led by John Bailey (GPr LS0019) of George, embarked on a hike to the top of George Peak to repair / rejuvenate Trig Beacon No.29 and install the below plaque in memory of Dave, with the necessary consent, of course.

A very fitting tribute indeed!

